

NUCLEAR POWER GRAB IN EUROPE?

*Corporate lobbyists
and some Members
of the European
Parliament are
working in tandem
to spin the nuclear
option as a
sustainable solution
for meeting future
energy needs.*

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The pro-nuclear lobby's campaign in the climate change debate

The threats posed by climate change and diminishing energy supplies are high on the European Union's (EU's) political agenda. Meanwhile, a European nuclear industry group, FORATOM, is working with a committed group of pro-nuclear MEPs [Members of the European Parliament] to push the European Parliament (EP) to label nuclear energy as sustainable. Their strategy is to spin nuclear energy as the solution to the current energy threats, so that MEPs will vote on 14 December to greatly expand the EU's nuclear energy activity as a means to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Energy is a hot issue in Brussels. On 10 January 2007, the Commission will publish its Strategic Review on Energy, to be preceded by a critical vote in the EP on 14 December 2006 on the so-called Morgan report on the Green Paper on Energy.¹ The rapidly growing and dramatic effects of climate change leave no doubt about the need to reduce dependency on fossil fuels. This need for action has unleashed a new phase in the tug of war between nuclear and renewable energy. This is supplemented by grand political talk linking broader trends in geopolitics with continuing energy supply needs. This combination creates a situation ripe for heavy lobbying.

The need to fight climate change is not a new argument for the nuclear lobby, often labelled as its best friend. For 15 years the nuclear industry has been using the argument about the need to reduce CO₂ emissions as a last-chance attempt to lever itself back as a strong policy choice. Since the disaster at Chernobyl in 1986, nuclear energy has become an unpopular option among the public, within an increasing number of governments and among most EU decision-makers. For example, at present, only 12 per cent of European citizens are in favour of nuclear energy.²

With the threat of climate change, the nuclear industry has grasped an opportunity to campaign to be regarded as a solution. Yet, they lost a first big battle when the parties to the Kyoto Protocol banned nuclear energy as part of the so-called flexible mechanisms: the clean development mechanism (CDM) and joint implementation (JI). However, new circumstances offer fertile ground for the relaunch of the nuclear industry in the EU. These include: the decision by the Bush administration to stay out of the Kyoto Protocol; the hardening of climate positions by European industry, such as the employers' organisation UNICE; the entrance into the EU of new Eastern European members with a heavy reliance on nuclear energy; and the expansion in Brussels of radical right-wing think-tanks from the United States which advocate reactionary climate policies. Nuclear energy remains banned from the Kyoto market-based mechanisms (the CDM and JI) until 2012.

However, all options remain open post-2012, in the context of ongoing negotiations. FORATOM, the Brussels-based trade association of the European nuclear industry, is doing its best to exploit these new openings. One key target is the European Parliament, where FORATOM has developed strong collaboration with a steady group of pro-nuclear MEPs. In October 2005, most of those MEPs signed a "Declaration on Climate Change and Nuclear Energy". Indeed, written into this declaration is the fact that it is the result of an initiative "launched by the European Atomic Forum (FORATOM)".³ It calls for recognition of: "...the vital contribution made by the nuclear industry to reducing CO₂ emissions... All low-carbon-intensive power generation technologies will need to contribute... However, we strongly believe that the increased use of nuclear energy, as the largest single contributor to the fight against climate change, is essential." The declaration explicitly calls for nuclear energy to be included in the Kyoto Protocol's

market-based mechanisms, CDM and JI. Some of the 27 MEPs who signed were UK Socialist Terry Wynn, UK Conservative Geoffrey van Orden, Spanish Conservative Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Slovenian Conservative Romana Jordan Cizelj, German Conservative Herbert Reul and Finnish Conservative Eija-Riitta Korhola.

FORATOM: A history of MEP collaboration

The co-operation between FORATOM and pro-nuclear MEPs has proved very successful in the past. For example, in November 2005 FORATOM scored a major victory by convincing sufficient MEPs to reject an amendment during a vote in the EP. The amendment stated that "reducing global emissions must not lead to other threats" and that "CDM/JI...must continue to exclude nuclear activities". This amendment had already been approved by the Environmental Committee.⁴

According to the European Nuclear Society's November 2005 "ENS News" (ENS shares its Secretariat with FORATOM), FORATOM's Secretariat had at the time been "working to remove the anti-nuclear reference".⁵ The report goes on to explain the two ways in which FORATOM could win: "Lobby for a political party to put forward an amendment deleting the third sentence 'reiterates its opinion that CDM/JI or similar credits must continue to exclude nuclear activities'" or "Lobby for at least 32 MEPS—regardless of their political affiliation—to co-sign an amendment deleting the third sentence". FORATOM decided to go for the second option, as "the compromise amendment was supported by the EPP-ED (European Conservative Group)—at least according to their voting list". The ENS report stated: "Over the past two weeks, FORATOM's Secretariat successfully obtained the 32 MEP signatures needed to table an amendment at the upcoming November 2006 Plenary Session.

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issue to give us feedback on the multiple meetings they have with other MEPs if they agree to co-sign the amendments. It is usually the assistants of MEPs who try to collect the signatures of the MEPs who wish to co-sign the amendments but they always appreciate if someone can give them a hand at it—considering that the deadlines we deal with are extremely tight."⁶

According to ENS: "Getting the 32 MEP signatures was the easy part of the process... The more difficult part, however, is getting a majority of the

In fact, it secured over 50 MEP signatures during a two-day visit to Strasbourg for the Parliament's October Plenary Session—with the lobbying support of some Brussels-based nuclear representatives."

Those signatures allowed Spanish conservative MEP Alejo Vidal-Quadras to table a new amendment without the anti-nuclear reference. When asked about the fact that it was FORATOM which collected the signatures, Vidal-Quadras replied: "It is easier for us to have the helping hand of the lobby presenting the

732 MEPs to support the amendment during the vote." Yet, the nuclear lobby set to work again, reporting at the time that: "FORATOM's Secretariat will continue to urge MEPs to support this amendment by, for example, urging them to speak to their colleagues, right up until the vote takes place in November. The Secretariat will also help organize meetings with key MEPs to discuss the matter further. Whatever the outcome, everything possible will have been done to get the amendment accepted."⁷

Their efforts certainly bore fruit, and Vidal-Quadras's amendment was passed by the plenary on 16 November 2005.⁸

The nuclear industry with its allies in the EP can use two institutionalised channels for its work: an MEP business club called the European Energy Forum (EEF), and a cross-party group known as the Forum for the Future of Nuclear Energy (FFNE).

Business members of EEF include Shell, Total, ExxonMobil and nuclear energy giants British Energy, EDF and Areva. A confidential source who regularly attends its meetings confirmed that discussions which start at the EEF usually end up at the Parliament. He went on to describe the EEF as "the submarine of the energy industry". The EEF's director-general, Jean-Claude Charrault, is the former head of the Commission's nuclear policy division. Most of the EEF's funding comes from business. When asked by Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) about its funding, the Secretariat refused to answer; but according to an informed source, its annual budget is over a million euros. EEF's work is mainly around events at the invitation of business. Apart from dinners, conferences and seminars, the forum often organises all-paid-for (by the organising companies) trips for interested MEPs to visit nuclear power plants.⁹ A regular of those trips is British Conservative MEP Giles Chichester.

THE NUCLEAR LOBBY IN BRUSSELS

FORATOM is the main lobby group for the nuclear industry in Europe. It claims to "act as the voice of the industry in energy policy discussions involving the EU institutions".²⁰ Apart from 17 national nuclear associations, FORATOM's members include 800 firms, among them major nuclear interests such as the French EDF and Areva, the British BNFL and British Energy, the German RWE and E.ON, the Belgian Electrabel and the Spanish Endesa.

In Brussels, it is located in the same street as the Commission and the Council of Ministers (rue de la Loi), a stone's throw from the European Parliament. FORATOM shares its Secretariat with the European Nuclear Society (ENS, a federation of 26 nuclear organisations). FORATOM's director-general Santiago San Antonio is also secretary-general of ENS. FORATOM and ENS each has three accredited lobbyists to the European Parliament.²¹

In total, FORATOM has over 20 people working at its Brussels headquarters. Their work is supported by the activities of individual nuclear companies. Between them, EDF, Areva, TVO, Siemens, E.ON, RWE, Vattenfall, BNFL and CEZ have 22 accredited lobbyists at the European Parliament. This does not include consultants and PR and PA firms likely to be working on a contract basis for the nuclear industry to advance its interests.

Currently, the lack of mandatory lobbying disclosure makes it impossible to know how much money is invested by the nuclear industry in its lobbying effort aimed at EU institutions.

Chichester is chair of both the EEF and the EP Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (ITRE), which decides the energy policy proposals that will be taken to the EP Plenary. Chichester has taken part in at least six visits to nuclear sites and has always supported nuclear expansion.

The Forum for the Future of Nuclear Energy was founded in 2003 by UK Socialist MEP Terry Wynn, a longstanding pro-nuclear campaigner who strongly advocates the benefits of nuclear energy in the fight against climate change. Since Wynn's retirement from the European Parliament in early 2006, the forum is being chaired by Hungarian Socialist MEP Edit Herczog. The FFNE is open to MEPs, the nuclear industry and the interested public, and it is described as an informal body whose aim is to "provide MEPs and civil servants with a platform for an open and objective discussion on nuclear energy". But in practice, the agenda is determined by FORATOM, whose members are usually speakers at the forum's events. FORATOM's institutional affairs manager, Guy Parker, explains that "FORATOM suggests potential topics of discussion and speakers to Mrs Herczog".¹⁰

Mrs Herczog advised CEO that "the working program and the logistics are discussed and arranged between the involved MEPs, their assistants and the potential participants (speakers) who either themselves wish to come to the forum, or are proposed to do so by Members".¹¹ In 2006, only one event was on the initiative of Herczog, whereas two came from nuclear industry representatives (Vattenfall and CEZ); another event is programmed for January 2007 on the initiative of nuclear giant Areva. Mrs Herczog describes her chairmanship of FFNE as "totally honorary and in fact more a question of practicality, since someone has to send out the invitations and chair the meetings".

According to FORATOM's Guy Parker, his organisation has been actively lobbying MEPs from all political groups.¹² And the pro-nuclear battalion is gaining ground, scoring points in the run-up to the 14 December 2006 plenary vote. On 23 November, the Morgan report was voted on in the ITRE committee. Thirteen amendments matching the demands of the nuclear industry were tabled by MEPs involved on the FFNE. Nine of these were signed by Mrs Herczog.¹³ The number of MEPs supporting various pro-nuclear and anti-renewable amendments was larger than usual. A major victory was the clearly favourable reference to nuclear energy after the vote. This was in contrast to the draft report which said that "nuclear energy remains a controversial area" and that "any decision will remain the responsibility of the Member States".¹⁴

After the ITRE vote, the text now to be proposed to the plenary says that "nuclear energy is a part of the European political debate on the energy mix" and is "a way of avoiding CO₂ emissions" and that the EP "urges the Commission to investigate the development of nuclear energy in Member States". This new text paves the way for nuclear energy to be included in the flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol after 2012. It also "calls the Commission to continue supporting research into all sources of energy (conventional, nuclear and renewable)".¹⁵

Currently, over 50 per cent of the EU's energy R&D funding is

dedicated to nuclear research.¹⁶ Renewable sources are in need of significant support in order simply to be regarded as a basic status-quo option. Nationally within the EU, the push for nuclear energy is yielding results. For example, the UK prime minister, Tony Blair, recently changed his mind in favour of nuclear.¹⁷ In other EU countries, new nuclear plants are either being planned or are well under construction.¹⁸

On the other hand, nuclear lobbyists have failed to prevent a call for binding sectoral targets in the Morgan report that currently excludes them because of the use of the term "renewable". The report proposes a target of 25 per cent of renewable sources in primary energy by 2020. Pro-nuclear MEPs had proposed to replace that call with a target for "60% of the EU electricity demand from CO₂-neutral technologies by 2020". This is in line with FORATOM demands.

This failed amendment represents a clever move, as bringing renewable and nuclear energy together under the label "CO₂-neutral" not only offers nuclear energy the chance to borrow from the positive name of renewable, it also avoids the distinction and therefore decision between the two. Fundamentally, this would leave the door wide open to a big increase of the share of nuclear energy within the overall EU energy mix.

Despite this failure at the ITRE committee, with the 14 December plenary on the horizon, nuclear proponents have devised another tactic to bring in the change and the target for 60 per cent from CO₂-neutral technologies. The new attempt will be presented as an amendment tabled by the EPP (European People's Party-Christian Democrats) and UEN (Union for Europe of the Nations) groups.¹⁹

While environmental groups also try to influence the energy debate, their capacity cannot compare to that of the nuclear industry. The nuclear lobby has the financial resources to be active on all

fronts. For example, on 8 December 2006, less than a week before the Plenary vote, FORATOM organised an educational trip for MEP assistants to a nuclear site in northern France.

Information on the financial resources behind pro-nuclear lobby efforts would shed a clearer light on the (im)balance of influencing forces. A vehicle for this could be the European Transparency Initiative (ETI), expected to be finalised in March 2007 by the European Commission. The ETI aims to regulate and improve transparency around lobbying towards the EU institutions.

The vote on 14 December in the EP will influence the Commission. If nuclear lobbyists get their demand and nuclear energy is promoted as a way, together with renewables, for the EU to meet its Kyoto commitments and fight climate change, this will send a strong signal to the Commission as it embarks on the Strategic EU Energy Review.

This review is scheduled to take place in January 2007 and is expected to lead to crucial decisions on energy policy when EU governments meet at the Council's Spring Summit in March. Should the vote of 14 December start the ball rolling towards the return of nuclear energy to Europe, this will have disastrous consequences for people and the environment.

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POSTSCRIPT

Nuclear lobbying offensive fails...by a hair's breadth

CEO update on the European Parliament Plenary vote:

On 14 December [2006], the Plenary of the European Parliament (EP) voted on the "Report on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy", also known as the Morgan report.

Nuclear industry lobbyists in Brussels had worked hard to influence the final wording of the report to provide new opportunities for expansion of nuclear power in Europe. But in the end, FORATOM and other nuclear lobby groups didn't get what they had hoped for. Despite months of intensive lobbying, they failed to convince a majority of the Parliament to vote for dropping binding targets for renewable energy.

However, they were not far from achieving their objectives. Amendment 9 (proposing a target for "CO₂ neutral energy technologies to supply 60% of EU electricity demand by 2020") was rejected by a narrow majority of only four votes (out of the total 732 MEPs).

The proposal to remove binding targets for the share of

renewable energy by 2020 was rejected by 24 votes. Amendment 4, which claimed that "current scientific developments reliably ensure the safety of nuclear power plants", was rejected by 23 votes.

On 10 January 2007, the European Commission will present its long-awaited Strategy Review on Energy. It remains to be seen whether the opinion of the European Parliament will be taken into account seriously. The Spring Summit of EU government leaders in March will make final decisions on the basis of the Strategy Review.

About the Author:

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) is a European-based research and campaign group targeting the threats to democracy, equity, social justice and the environment posed by the economic and political power of corporations and their lobby groups.

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Endnotes

Note: Links to the cited sources can be accessed via the CEO file at:

<http://www.corporateeurope.org/docs/NuclearPowerGrab.pdf>.

1. ITER (Committee on Industry, Research and Energy), "Report on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy—Green Paper" (2006/2113(INI)), Rapporteur: Eluned Morgan, 28 November 2006.

2. According to a Eurobarometer survey, Europeans are very favourable to solar energy (48%) and wind energy (31%), while nuclear is only supported by 12%; "Attitudes Towards Energy", October–November 2005, p. 9.

3. "Declaration on Climate Change and Nuclear Energy": this was released to coincide with the FORATOM seminar "Nuclear Energy: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change", which took place on 19 October 2005 in the European Parliament and was chaired by Finnish Conservative MEP Eija-Riitta Korhola.

4. The own-initiative report by Swedish Conservative MEP Anders Wijkman, on the Commission's February 2005 communication "Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change" (COM (2005)0035), which presented the Commission's vision on the EU's climate change policy for the post-2012 period. Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, "Report on Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change" (2005/2049(INI)), Rapporteur: Anders Wijkman.

5. ENS news, [http://www.euronuclear.org/e-news/e-news-10/winning-the-](http://www.euronuclear.org/e-news/e-news-10/winning-the-battle.htm)

[battle.htm](http://www.euronuclear.org/e-news/e-news-10/winning-the-battle.htm).

6. Email sent by MEP Alejo Vidal-Quadras, dated 17 July 2006.

7. ENS news, <http://www.euronuclear.org/e-news/e-news-10/winning-the-battle.htm>.

8. Plenary vote on 16 November 2005, Resolution P6_TA(2005)0433.

9. See list of events on the website of the European Energy Forum. While it is true that occasionally the forum covers topics on renewable energy, one MEP shared his view that this is a tactic to protect an image of neutrality. See also Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), "Transparency Boost Needed for European Parliament Cross-Party Groups", October 2006, at <http://www.corporateeurope.org>.

10. Email from Guy Parker to CEO, dated 4 December 2006.

11. Email from Edit Herczog to CEO, dated 4 December 2006.

12. Email from Guy Parker to CEO, dated 4 December 2006.

13. See amendments 1, 12, 27, 43, 47, 130, 216, 235, 236, 322, 325, 334, 336, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/itre/itre_20061122_0900.htm.

14. ITER (Committee on Industry, Research and Energy), "Draft Report on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy—Green Paper" (2006/2113(INI) Provisional), Rapporteur: Eluned Morgan, 19 September 2006.

15. ITER (Committee on Industry, Research and Energy), "Report on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy—Green

Paper" (2006/2113(INI)), Rapporteur: Eluned Morgan, 28 November 2006, op. cit. Tabled amendments:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/itre/itre_20061122_0900.htm.

16. Antony Frogatt, "Not Moving Forward: Analysis of EU Energy Policy", Brussels, 9 November 2006.

17. See, for instance, Matthew Tempest, "'I've changed my mind on nuclear power,' admits Blair", *The Guardian*, 4 July 2006.

18. The construction of a new nuclear plant is underway in Finland; France, Romania and Bulgaria are about to begin new constructions; Slovakia, Poland, Turkey, Czech Republic and the UK are considering the possibility of building new nuclear plants.

19. Amendments on Eluned Morgan report, "A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy"—Motion for a Resolution (A6-0426/2006), 6 December 2006.

20. FORATOM website, <http://www.foratom.org> (visited 10 December 2006).

21. ENS-registered lobbyists are Laurent Furedi, Hans Korteweg (FORATOM head of cabinet and institutional affairs manager) and Guy Parker (who responds to CEO emails to FORATOM as institutional affairs manager). FORATOM-registered lobbyists are Caroline Ciuciu (responsible for legal affairs and paid by Areva), Sami Tulonen (institutional affairs—nuclear generation) and Santiago San Antonio (secretary-general of ENS and director-general of FORATOM).